

Name \_\_\_\_\_

1. CIRCLE any vocabulary word you do not know in the article:
2. Read and answer the questions

## **What's the Latest in Parachute Design?**

*By Matthew Anderson*

Skydiving has been around since World War I, when the military used it for stealth missions. Today's skydiving technology would be unrecognizable by the soldiers of foregone years. The improvements made in design and safety have made it possible for ordinary folk to enjoy this sport in greater and greater numbers. Falling through the sky at more than 120 mph has a great appeal for a lot of thrill seekers.

New parachute designs are one of the biggest technological changes we have witnessed in recent years. Old parachutes were just a half a ball made of nylon, with a hole in the middle for the air to go through. A parachute today looks more like a bird's wing than a lightweight ball and this design gives the parachuter a great deal of control. Even though the skydiver is falling through the sky at over 120 mph, he can quickly stop that descent by opening the parachute.

Another new development is an altimeter that lets the diver know the optimum time for deploying the chute. In the old days, the parachuters relied on visual reckoning and gut feelings. This altimeter has now become one of the most important new pieces of equipment for a skydiver, second only to his parachute and his reserve chute.

Skydivers today want to get the most fall time as they can, so relying on an altimeter can allow them to calculate the exact moment when they will have to open. Recent advances have even produced altimeters that correctly read the distance to earth when the diver is doing tricks or flying upside down.

Choosing a parachute is determined by the type of skydiving the person is going to do. Arrowhead shapes are popular, as are the wing designs, and some still prefer the old fashioned round parachute. Helmets have also undergone some design changes that allow for less injury if the diver hits the ground wrong. Of course, no helmet will help a diver if his chute doesn't open properly or too late.

Every parachutist should carefully examine their gear every time they parachute. Any weaknesses or tears, any fraying of cords or harness straps should alert the diver that its time

for replacement. Even a seemingly unimportant item such as the skydiving jumpsuit can create danger if it is frayed or has holes in it. These faults will cause the wind to travel over the suit diffidently and will affect the fall to earth.

Write the letter of the BEST answer on the space provided:

\_\_\_\_\_ 1. What is the main idea of the article?

- a. Parachutes are important
- b. Parachutes have changed since WWI
- c. Technology has made parachutes safer
- d. Parachutes should be safe.

\_\_\_\_\_ 2. COMPLETE: Parachutes today look more like a

- a. Kite
- b. bird's wing
- c. ball
- d. cloud

\_\_\_\_\_ 3. How fast do divers fall, on average?

- a. 110 mph
- b. 120 mph
- c. 130 mph
- d. 140 mph

\_\_\_\_\_ 4. What do you think an altimeter measures?

- a. A tool that measures height
- b. A tool that measures distance
- c. A tool that measures altitude
- d. A tool that catches birds

\_\_\_\_\_ 5. What other safety measures must skydivers consider for safety?

- a. Appropriate helmet
- b. Age of plane
- c. Ropes
- d. Weather